

**Statement of**  
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**Forest Service**  
**United States Department of Agriculture**  
**Before The**  
**Subcommittee On Forests And Forest Health**  
**Committee on Resources**  
**United States House of Representatives**

Madam Chairman And Members Of The Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act. I am accompanied today by Mark Madrid, Forest Supervisor of the Plumas National Forest.

Since the enactment of the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act, we have been committed to the successful implementation of its provisions. Many Forest Service employees have worked diligently with the Quincy Library Group, the community, Congress, and others to accomplish this task. With the signing of the Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement on August 20, 1999, we are now ready to move forward with implementation of the pilot project.

**Background**

The Quincy Library Group Community Stability Proposal (Proposal) is an agreement developed by a coalition of citizens, elected officials, local communities, the forest products industry, fisheries groups, and environmental organizations, in northern California. The intent of the Proposal was to develop a resource management program promoting ecological health on National Forest lands and economic health for communities in the northern Sierra Nevada mountains. Discussions about a pilot project to implement the Proposal began in 1992 when the Quincy Library Group formed. Legislation to implement the

Proposal was subsequently introduced by Congress in 1997, and was enacted as the Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act (Act) in Title IV of the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 1999 (P.L. 105-277).

The Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a pilot project for a period of up to 5 years from the date of commencement of the pilot project. To accomplish the purpose of the Act, resource management activities are required that include fuelbreak construction consisting of a strategic system of defensible fuel profile zones, group selection and individual tree selection harvest, and a program of riparian management and riparian restoration projects. All of these activities will be conducted consistent with environmental laws.

### **Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement**

The purpose and need for a pilot project is to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of resource management activities designed to meet ecologic, economic, and fuel reduction objectives on specified National Forest System lands in the Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe National Forests. The pilot project area includes 2.4 million acres. Approximately 900,000 acres are off-base, deferred, or otherwise unavailable as defined by the Act, and not available for any treatment, leaving 1.5 million acres for implementation of the pilot project activities.

The Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) describes a proposed action and four alternatives, including a no action alternative, developed by the Forest Service and described in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement to implement the Act. More than 10,000 comments were received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Approximately 90% of the 10,000 comments expressed identical or similar concerns. This FEIS discloses the expected environmental consequences of implementing a pilot project. The FEIS addresses the comments received and analyzed as part of the public involvement process.

The Record of Decision (ROD) amends the Forest Plans for the Plumas, Lassen, and Tahoe National Forests and identifies the alternative selected by the Forest Service and the rationale for its selection. Alternative 2, as modified, was selected. The decision will implement a strategy to reduce wildfire, while protecting California spotted owls and other wildlife associated with old growth forests. Alternative 2 was modified so that no timber harvesting will be permitted in suitable owl habitat, including nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat, unless and until the Forest Service establishes a long-term California spotted owl strategy for the Sierra Nevada that allows such an activity. This modification essentially defers

an additional 420,000 acres. This California spotted owl habitat protection strategy is not projected to last for the duration of the pilot project. If a new California spotted owl habitat management strategy is adopted as a result of the Sierra Nevada Framework Project, it will take the place of the approach described above, and apply for the remainder of the pilot project period.

Since selection of Alternative 2 amends the Land and Resource Management Plans for the Lassen, Plumas, and Tahoe National Forests, and because this is a programmatic decision and will not implement any site-specific projects, the decision is subject to administrative review and appeals of the decision must be filed within 45 days of the date of the published legal notice. In addition, an appellant may request a stay of implementation of site-specific projects after providing a written request to the reviewing officer, the regional forester.

### **Implementation**

The Forest Service will begin the environmental analysis and documentation process required by the National Environmental Policy Act for projects that implement this decision. We will prioritize the implementation of those projects that are currently being planned and that are consistent with the decision. We will focus initially on watersheds with a high resource priority and known fire risk problems.

I would like to discuss our plans for some of the specific resource management activities required for implementing the decision.

### **Defensible Fuel Profile Zones**

Alternative 2 includes 40,000-60,000 acres of fuel reduction each year for five years, through a strategic system of fuel profile zones. A fuel profile zone includes shaded fuelbreaks, thinnings, and individual tree selection cutting. These zones will be designed to avoid the approximately 62,000 acres of suitable owl habitat that are estimated to exist within the fuelbreak areas, until new owl guidelines are developed.

### **Group Selection**

Alternative 2 includes 8,700 acres of small group selection treatments per year, resulting in the removal of trees in small openings in the forest of one half to two acres in size. These will be scattered across the landscape, and are intended to provide multi-storied forest stands of different age classes which would mimic

stand structures developed under natural fire regimes. These may, where appropriate, be used in conjunction with the defensible fuels profile zones.

### Riparian Management

Riparian /aquatic ecosystem protection will be enhanced through a riparian management projects. Examples of proposed projects include wide protection zones, and restoration projects such as meadow restoration and vegetative plantings. These projects will be consistent with the Scientific Advisory Team guidelines as directed in the Act.

### Monitoring

The Scientific Review Team appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture will assess the success of implemented actions in meeting the objectives outlined in the Act.

The monitoring strategy will:

- Provide information to managers to be used in applying the principles of adaptive management.
- Assist the agency and the public in gauging the success of resource management activities in achieving resource objectives.

### Summary

We are committed to implementing the decision made for The Herger-Feinstein Quincy Library Group Forest Recovery Act, while ensuring protection of California spotted owl habitat and habitat for other old-growth dependent species. Indeed, the selection of Alternative 2, as modified, will implement the law while complying with all other environmental laws. We are also committed to monitoring of the project to ensure that restoration activities are in compliance with environmental protections, and to assess the overall effectiveness of the pilot project.

This concludes my written statement. I would be happy to answer any questions you or members of your subcommittee may have at this time.